

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

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R 220500Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3095

USIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

NQTAGS: OGENWF CB

SUBJ: EMBASSY PRESS POLICY

1. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REASONS FOR THE PERSISTENTLY
INFERIOR PRESS COVERAGE OF THE WAR IN CAMBODIA.

(A) THE RESIDENT AMERICAN MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES ARE
INEXPERIENCED; MOST ARE STRINGERS WITH LITTLE
PREVIOUS PRESS WORK;

(B) THE ABLER, ACCREDITED CORRESPONDENTS WHO DROP IN FROM
TIME TO TIME ARE NOT HERE LONG ENOUGH TO FORM AN ADEQUATE
BASIS TO JUDGE THE KHMER; THEIR COUNTRY AND THEIR WAR;
MANY DO NOT HAVE FRENCH, WHICH IS INDISPENSABLE;

(C) THE COUNTRY ITSELF IS HARD TO KNOW, BENEATH ITS
WELCOMING SURFACE; INDEED IT DOESN'T KNOW ITSELF; THERE IS

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NO SURE SOURCE OF INFORMATION TO TURN TO AMONG THE KHMER,
TRAVEL IS DIFFICULT AND OFTEN DANGEROUS;

(D) PERSONAL POLITICAL BELIEFS OF CERTAIN REPORTERS AND
EDITORIAL STAFFS, IN PARTICULAR THE TENDENCY TO USE REPORTING
AS A MEANS OF WITNESSING AGAINST THE INDOCHINESE WAR, OR
AGAINST THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, ARE AN IMPORTANT DISTORTING
FACTOR.

2. THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT THIS LAST FACTOR, AND
LITTLE ABOUT THE OTHERS. WE HAVE TRIED WITHIN THE LIMITS
OF THE VERY HEAVY WORK WEEKS MOST MEN ASSIGNED HERE CARRY,
TO PUT OURSELVES AT THE DISPOSITION OF THE PRESS. EMBASSY

OFFICERS SAW 75 CORRESPONDENTS IN APRIL, 49 IN MAY, 11 IN
JUNE, 55 IN JULY, 63 IN AUGUST, AND 34 SO FAR IN SEPTEMBER.

3. WITHOUT HAVING ANY ILLUSIONS AS TO THE EFFECT, WE THINK
WE SHOULD NOW MAKE A FURTHER EFFORT. BEGINNING TUESDAY
NEXT WEEK, CHARGE, THE ECONOMIC COUNSELOR AND CHMEDTC WILL
MEET INFORMALLY WITH THE PRESS EVERY OTHER WEEK AT
CHARGE'S RESIDENCE. GROUND RULES WILL BE:

(A) NO RPT NO ATTRIBUTION, ALTHOUGH INDIVIDUAL REQUESTS FOR
QUOTES WILL BE CONSIDERED EITHER FOR THE RECORD, OR FOR
ATTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN OR WESTERN SOURCES;

(B) AGENCIES OF REPRESENTATIVES WHO BREAK CONFIDENCE WOULD BE
DROPPED FROM THE GROUP;

(C) ALL RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVES OF U.S. MEDIA WILL BE INVITED,
WHETHER FULLY ACCREDITED OR STRINGERS, AND WHATEVER THEIR
NATIONALITY; ONLY FULLY ACCREDITED VISITORS WILL BE INCLUDED
(I.E., NO VISITING STRINGERS OR FREE LANCE).

4. OTHER EMBASSY PRESS PRACTICES WILL REMAIN AS AT PRESENT:
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(A) ALL INTERVIEWS AND CONTACTS TO BE APPROVED ON A CASE BY
CASE BASIS BY THE DCM;

(B) INTERVIEWS WITH DATT TO BE GRANTED ONLY EXCEPTIONALLY,

TO PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF HIS REPORTING;

(C) INTERVIEWS WILL BE LARGELY AT A SENIOR LEVEL (I.E., COUNSELOR AND ITS EQUIVALENT).

5. WE WILL OF COURSE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE COMPLAINTS, AS WILL YOU, THAT THE EMBASSY IS NOT DOING ENOUGH FOR THE MEDIA. THAT IS INEVITABLE. HOWEVER, WE WILL BE MAKING EVERY REASONABLE EFFORT TO HELP THE PRESS KEEP INFORMED.
ENDERS

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